



SEPT.

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE

AUTHORITY

CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN

LOOK OUT! ROCKY'S
EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT
INTO SPACE HAS GIVEN
HIM STRANGE, MENACING
POWERS!

TIM BOYARD
6037 Marlwood Rd.
Indpls 26, Ind.



Featuring
**"The INVINCIBLE
CHALLENGER!"**

"This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold except at the full cover price, nor with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition, nor affixed to, nor as part of any advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever."

CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN

BEHOLD, YE MORTALS! THE CHALLENGERS HAVE FOUND THE SECRETS OF THE ANCIENTS-- AND THE DOOM THAT WAITS FOR THOSE WHO TAKE THIS QUEST!



IN BYGONE AGES, WHEN SORCERERS PRACTICED THEIR STRANGE AND MYSTERIOUS ARTS IN CIVILIZATIONS NOW NAMELESS AND FORGOTTEN, THEY WRESTED SECRETS FROM THE UNKNOWN WHICH WOULD HAVE BETTER BEEN LEFT UNDISTURBED. BUT THE MOST TERRIFYING SECRET OF ALL WAS THE ONE WHICH SEEMED DESTINED TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE EVIL MEN WHO FOOLISHLY DARED TO TAMPER WITH ITS POWER! THE FATE OF ALL MANKIND NOW RESTED ON THE SWIFTNESS AND COURAGE OF THOSE WHO'D PREVENT THE RELEASE OF THIS POWER-- THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN!

THE SECRET OF THE SORCERER'S MIRROR

CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN, No. 3, Aug.-Sept., 1958. Published bi-monthly by NATIONAL COMICS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 2nd and Dickey Streets, SPARTA, ILL. Editorial, Executive offices and Subscriptions, 480 LEXINGTON AVENUE, NEW YORK 17, N. Y. Whitney Ellsworth, Editor. SECOND CLASS ENTRY APPLIED FOR at the post office at Sparta, Ill. under the act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription in the U. S. 75c including postage. Foreign, \$1.50 in American funds.

For advertising rates address Richard A. Feldon & Co., 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y. ©1958 by National Comics Publications, Inc. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Except for those who have authorized use of their names, the stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this periodical are entirely imaginary and fictitious, and no identification with actual persons, living or dead, is intended or should be inferred.

Printed in U.S.A.



CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN



ON THE TRAIL OF AN INTERNATIONAL GANG OF THIEVES, THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN MAKE A HURRIED VISIT TO A MUSEUM AT A VERY DISTRESSING MOMENT...

THEY SEEMED TO STRIKE FROM NOWHERE, GENTLEMEN! THEY LOOTED ONE OF OUR PRIZE EXHIBITS OF ITS VALUABLE DISPLAYS!

SO WE MISSED THEM BY MINUTES THIS TIME! BUT WE'RE CLOSING THE GAP ON HILLARY MYCROFT AND HIS HOODLUMS!

AS YOU CAN SEE, WE WENT TO CONSIDERABLE TROUBLE TO RECREATE THE SETTING OF A SORCERER'S ROOM—EVEN RECONSTRUCTING AN IMAGE OF THE LEGENDARY MAN HIMSELF!

AND YOU SAY THESE VALUABLE ITEMS HAD JUST ARRIVED TO BE PLACED IN THIS EXHIBIT WHEN THE THIEVES APPEARED?

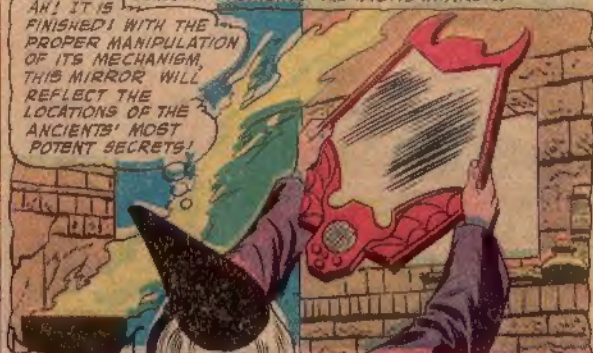


IT ISN'T JUST THAT! THESE WEREN'T THE ORDINARY FINDS THAT ARE DISCOVERED IN OLD RUINS! THE CHART AND MIRROR OF KREGON THE SORCERER ARE VITAL CLUES TO THE SCIENCE OF THE ANCIENTS!



"ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS VANISHED IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY, THE ARTS OF THEIR SORCERERS MANAGED TO SURVIVE WELL INTO THE MIDDLE AGES. IT WAS DURING THAT PERIOD THAT KREGON FASHIONED HIS MYSTIC MIRROR!"

AK! IT IS FINISHED! WITH THE PROPER MANIPULATION OF ITS MECHANISM, THIS MIRROR WILL REFLECT THE LOCATIONS OF THE ANCIENTS' MOST POTENT SECRETS!



"KREGON FOUND THESE HIDDEN PLACES, BUT...

THERE IS NO MEANS IN THESE BARBARIC TIMES BY WHICH I CAN REACH THESE REMOTE AREAS, BUT I SHALL MARK MY CHART FOR SOMEBODY IN THE FUTURE TO OPERATE MY MIRROR!

AND YOU BELIEVE THAT THESE ANCIENT SECRETS CAN BE FOUND BY THE CHARTS AND MIRROR THAT MYCROFT STOLE?

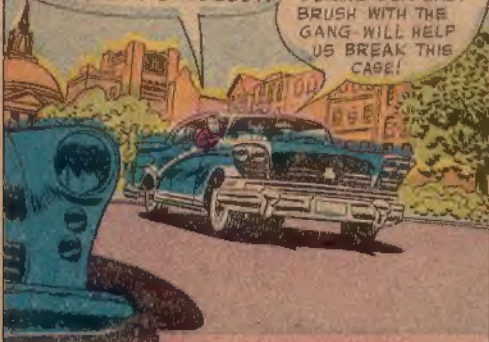
APPARENTLY HE DID, TOO! IF THERE ARE SUCH SECRETS AND THEY ARE REVEALED TO THIS EVIL MAN, MYCROFT—THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT DANGERS HE MAY LOOSE UPON US!



WITH CHARACTERISTIC SWIFTNESS, THE CHALLENGERS LEAVE THE MUSEUM, AND...

WE KNOW ONE SECRET LOCATION THAT OLD KREGON DIDN'T RECORD--HILLARY MYCROFT'S HIDEOUT!

GETTING IT FROM ONE OF HIS MEN WE CAPTURED DURING OUR LAST BRUSH WITH THE GANG WILL HELP US BREAK THIS CASE!



AT THAT MOMENT, IN AN OLD HOUSE OUTSIDE THE CITY...

THIS MIRROR IS BETTER THAN A TV SET, BOSS! IT NOT ONLY CAME UP WITH REFLECTIONS OF THE SECRET HIDING PLACES BUT MARKED OFF THEIR LOCATIONS, TOO!

YES, AND I'VE MADE MAPS OF EACH SPOT. NOW WE SHALL SET OUT TO RECOVER WHAT WAS OUT OF KREGON'S REACH!



HONEST, BOSS-- DO YOU THINK THIS "MUMBO JUMBO" WILL LEAD US TO SOMETHING WE CAN CASH IN ON?

DIDN'T YOU SEE THE MIRROR WORK? THIS IS MY GREATEST TRICK! WHEN THE SECRETS OF THE ANCIENT ARE MINE-- YOU'LL BE WORKING FOR THE MOST POWERFUL MAN ON EARTH-- ME, HILLARY MYCROFT!



SUDDENLY...

YOU'LL BE IN HANDCUFFS WHEN WE'RE THROUGH WITH YOU, MYCROFT!

THE CHALLENGERS! QUICKLY, MEN-- THIS WAY!



SWIFTLY, MYCROFT'S HAND DARTS TO A HIDDEN LEVER...

HAHAHAHA!

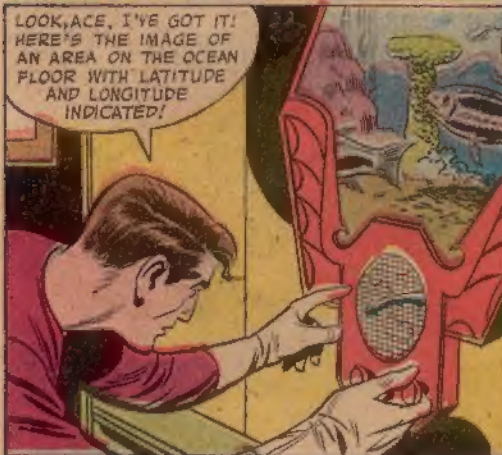
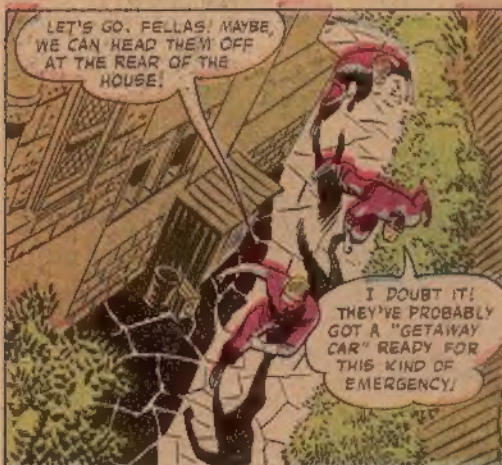
BEFORE YOU BIND A FOX-- YOU'VE GOT TO CATCH HIM FIRST!



BLAST MYCROFT AND HIS TRICKS! HE CUT US OFF WITH THIS DESCENDING WALL!

IT'S TOO STRONG TO BREAK THROUGH!





THEN...

LOOK AT THE REFLECTION WE GET WITH THESE COORDINATES! A NEEDLE-SHARP MOUNTAIN PEAK IN THE CENTER OF A STORM AREA! LOOK AT ITS WALLS-- THEY'VE BEEN WORN SMOOTH BY FIERCE WINDS!

THAT'LL BE A NASTY JOB-- EVEN FOR AN EXPERT CLIMBER! BUT IT'S MY DEPARTMENT, AND I'LL DO IT!

THE FINAL MARKINGS ARE GIVEN...

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANY ISLANDS IN THOSE LATITUDES, BUT THERE'S ONE AS CLEAR AS DAY! THIS CLOSE-UP INDICATES THE ANCIENT OBJECT IS HIDDEN THERE ATOP THE PLATEAU!

ACCORDING TO THIS NOTATION, THE ANCIENTS CALLED IT, "SINDBAD'S ISLAND"!

IT'S LIKELY THAT MYCROFT, HIMSELF, WILL CHOOSE THAT SPOT IN PREFERENCE TO THE OTHERS! ROCKY AND I WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM, BUT THE MAIN CONSIDERATION IS TO KEEP THOSE ANCIENT SECRETS OUT OF HIS HANDS!

THE SORCERER'S NOTES HINT OF STRANGE FORCES WITH UNIMAGINABLE POWERS! WE'D BETTER NOT FAIL!

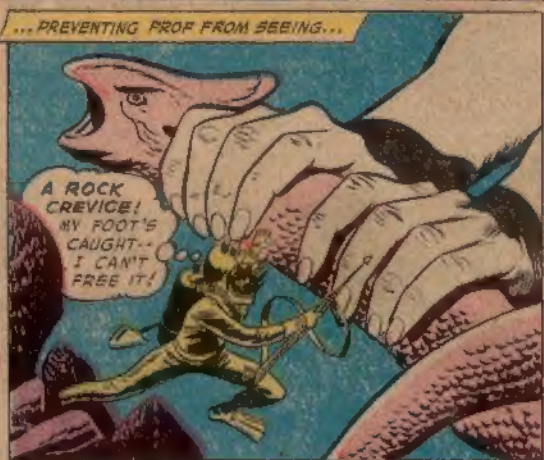
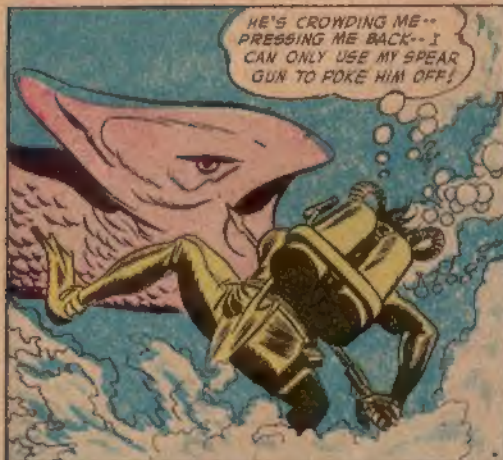
SOMETIME LATER, PROF GLIDES DOWN INTO THE SILENT WORLD BENEATH THE SEA...

THESE ARE DANGEROUS WATERS-- SWARMING WITH KILLER FISH!

THERE'S A MAN-- WHO MUST BE ONE OF MYCROFT'S CRONIES! HE'S DUG UP ONE OF THE ANCIENT OBJECTS!

BUT AS PROF THRASHES TOWARD HIS ADVERSARY...

GOOD GRAYV! WHAT A TIME FOR THIS THING TO SHOW UP!



RadioBeams

YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO TURN ON A RADIO IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY!



SHUT THAT OFF!



BUT, MISS---



HOW DO YOU EXPECT PEOPLE TO CONCENTRATE WHILE THEY READ?

BUT, MISS, I'M SURE IT'S ALL RIGHT--



-- THIS PROGRAM'S CALLED, "MUSIC TO READ BY"!!

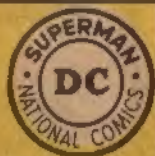
THE END



BE MY GUEST AT
PALISADES AMUSEMENT
PARK, NEW JERSEY.

THIS COUPON ENTITLES YOU TO

FREE ADMISSION
PLUS **2 FREE RIDES...**
ACTS AND PARKING!



ADMIT ONE (1) To
**PALISADES
AMUSEMENT PARK, N.J.**

GOOD MONDAYS and FRIDAYS
(EXCEPT HOLIDAYS) UNTIL 9 P.M.

Direct Buses from N.Y. 167th St. & B'way ... 41st St. & 6th Ave.

FREE RIDE

ADMIT ONE
"CATERPILLAR"

FREE RIDE

ADMIT ONE
"JET PLANE"

WORTH

65¢

THIS COUPON
APPEARS IN ALL
AUG. and SEPT.
ISSUES



HE'S PROBABLY ON HIS WAY TO DELIVER THAT THING TO MYCROFT ON SINBAD'S ISLAND! I'LL RENDEZVOUS THERE WITH ACE AND ROCKY!

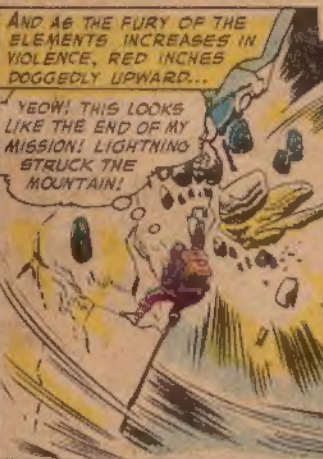
MEANWHILE, IN A WARREN, STORM-SWEPT MOUNTAIN AREA...

THERE'S NOT A SIGN OF MYCROFT OR HIS MEN... THEY MUST HAVE BEGUN THE CLIMB! FROM THE LOOK OF THINGS, WE'LL ALL HAVE A ROUGH TIME OF IT!



TWO HOURS LATER...

GREAT SCOTT! THE MOUNTAIN WALL IS WORK SO SMOOTH, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND A HANDHOLD! IT'S A MIRACLE I MADE IT THIS FAR-- EVEN WITH THIS AUTOMATIC HAND-DRILL!



AND AS THE FURY OF THE ELEMENTS INCREASES IN VIOLENCE, RED INCHES DOGGEDLY UPWARD...

YOW! THIS LOOKS LIKE THE END OF MY MISSION! LIGHTNING STRUCK THE MOUNTAIN!

UNDER THE IMPACT OF THE THUNDEROUS ROCK SLIDE, THE MOUNTAIN SEEMS TO SHAKE, BUT RED CLINGS TO HIS PRECARIOUS PERCH.



AND AS HIS LAST OUNCE OF STRENGTH EBBS...



I MADE IT... I'M AT THE TOP... BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF MYCROFT'S STOOGES-- GUESS THEY WEREN'T AS LUCKY AS I--

A STONY HOLLOW PROVIDES RED WITH SHELTER FROM THE WINDS-- AND THE OBJECT OF HIS MISSION...

SO THIS IS WHAT THEY WERE AFTER! NOW I'VE GOT TO REST... GET BACK SOME STRENGTH FOR THE DESCENT...



OVERCOME WITH FATIGUE, RED SLUMPS TO THE GROUND, HIS ARM DROPPING ON A PROJECTING ROD...



INSTANTLY, A PUFF OF GASEOUS CLOUD RISES, AND...



YOU MUST NOT DESCEND THE MOUNTAIN... IF YOU TRY, YOU WILL NOT LIVE... BUT THERE IS ANOTHER WAY!



INSIDE THE MOUNTAIN IS THE PASSAGE CARVED BY THE ANCIENTS... NEAR YOUR RIGHT HAND IS THE LOOSE STONE WHICH CONCEALS A LEVER... PULL IT, AND THE DOOR TO SAFETY WILL OPEN!



LIKE A DREAM, THE FACE IN THE CLOUD VANISHES, BUT RED DOES AS BID... I-I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING... THE PASSAGE... JUST AS THAT FANTASTIC VISION DESCRIBED IT!



THIS IS MORE LIKE IT! I'LL GET DOWN A LOT EASIER THAN I CAME UP!



BUT WAITING FOR THE EXHAUSTED RED WHEN HE EMERGES AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN...

STOP RIGHT THERE, CHALLENGER! WE GOT HERE BEFORE YOU, ALL RIGHT--BUT WE WERE IN NO HURRY TO MAKE THAT CLIMB WHEN WE SIZED UP THAT MOUNTAIN!

WHEN WE SPOTTED YOU COMING, WE DECIDED TO LET YOU DO OUR JOB FOR US! NOW HAND THAT OVER!



CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN



EVEN AS THE HOBSTERS MENACE HIM, RED'S HAND
PULLS FREE ONE OF THE OBJECT'S ROBS



THEN, HE COMPLIES WITH THE ORDER.

THAT'S THE CHALLENGER!
THANKS FOR HELPING
US OUT!

SORRY WE CAN'T
STICK AROUND.
WE'VE GOT TO
TELL MICROFT
ABOUT THIS.



THE TRICKY SCHEMERS! IF
THEY'RE HEADING FOR
SINDBAD'S ISLAND, I'LL
BE CLOSE ON THEIR
HEELS TO HELP ACE
AND ROCKY DEAL
WITH THEM.

BUT SINDBAD'S ISLAND IS THE
SCENE OF AN UNBELIEVABLE
OCCURRENCE WHEN ACE AND
ROCKY REACH ITS SHORE!

MICROFT MUST BE HERE!
I SAW HIS PLANE IN A
CAVE BEFORE WE
LANDED!

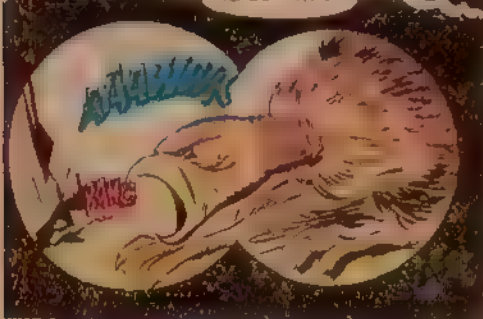


LISTEN TO THOSE
PAR-SPLITTING
SQUAWKS AND
SHOOTING WHATE
SO NO ONE?



UMPING JUMPER! IT'S A BIRD
AS BIG AS A BOMBER! IT'S PECKING AT
SOMETHING ON THE SIDE OF THAT HILL

THE LEGENDARY ROC. CAN
YOU SEE WHAT IT'S TRYING
TO GET AT?



MICROFT! THAT
THING'S GOT
MICROFT HOLED
UP IN A CAVE.

THAT COULDN'T BE A BREAK FOR US!
WHILE HE'S CONCERNED WITH THE
BIRD, WE CAN BEAT HIM TO
THAT ANCIENT SECRET!





ROCKY! THIS THING HAS ALLOWED US TO FALL-- IT'S DEFYING THE LAWS OF GRAVITY!



AND, INSTEAD OF BEING DASHED TO THE EARTH BELOW, THE CHALLENGERS GLIDE GENTLY TO THE GROUND.

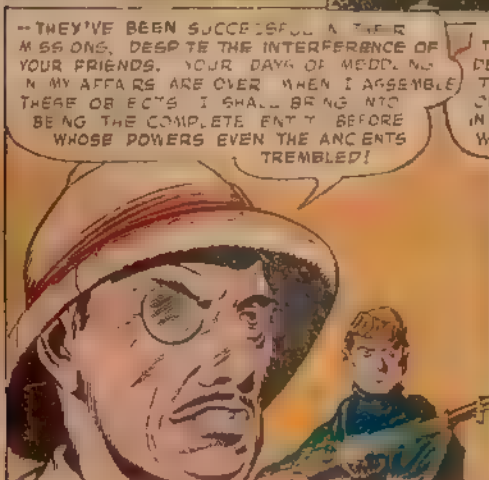
WE'RE GRATEFUL THANKS TO THE SECRETS OF THE ANCIENTS!

TO THINK THIS THING IS LITTLE MORE THAN AN ILLUSION! IT-- IT'S BEGINNING TO FADE--

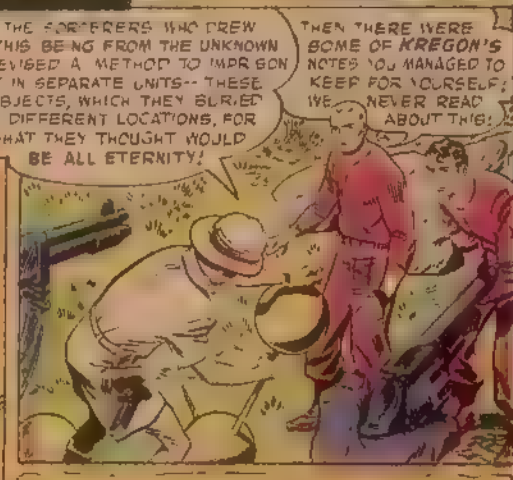


IT IS NOT AN ILLUSION! THE POWERS HAVE DONE THEIR WORK SO THEY ASSUME THE SIMPLE FORM DEVISED FOR THEM BY THE ANCIENT SORCERERS.

MYCROFT--AND YOU'VE BEEN JOINED BY YOUR MEN. THAT MEANS--

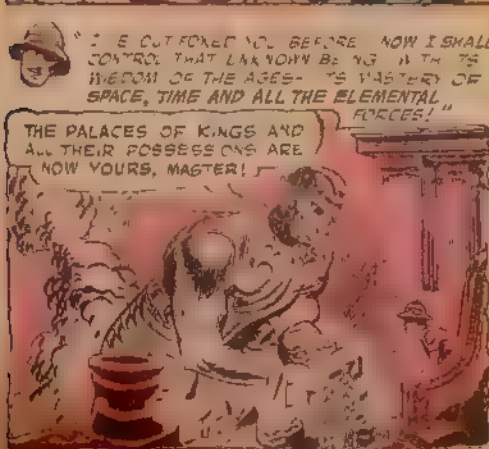


--THEY'VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL AT THEIR MISDEEDS, DESPITE THE INTERFERENCE OF YOUR FRIENDS. YOUR DAYS OF MEDDLING IN MY AFFAIRS ARE OVER WHEN I ASSEMBLE THESE OBJECTS I SHALL BECOME THE COMPLETE ENTITY BEFORE WHOSE POWERS EVEN THE ANCIENTS TREMBLED!



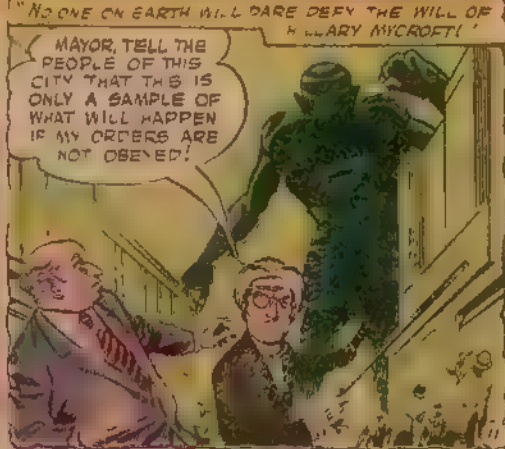
THE SORCERERS WHO DREW THIS BEING FROM THE UNKNOWN DEVISED A METHOD TO IMPROVE IT IN SEPARATE UNITS-- THESE OBJECTS, WHICH THEY BURIED IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, FOR WHAT THEY THOUGHT WOULD BE ALL ETERNITY!

THEN THERE WERE SOME OF KREGON'S NOTES YOU MANAGED TO KEEP FOR YOURSELF; WE NEVER READ ABOUT THIS!



"I HAVE OUTFOXTED YOU BEFORE. NOW I SHALL CONTROL THAT UNKNOWN BEING WITH THE MIGHT OF THE AGES-- ITS MASTERY OF SPACE, TIME AND ALL THE ELEMENTAL FORCES!"

THE PALACES OF KINGS AND ALL THEIR POSSESSIONS ARE NOW YOURS, MASTER!



"NO ONE ON EARTH WILL DARE DEFY THE WILL OF HARRY MYCROFT!"

MAYOR, TELL THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY THAT THIS IS ONLY A SAMPLE OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF MY ORDERS ARE NOT OBEYED!

The Most Wanted Man In The Universe

I WAS feeling good. For one thing, I was on my favorite cargo course—the Jupiter-Saturn run. There was just myself and a hold filled with Jupiter-made toys being exported to Saturn. After completing this run, I was due for a long vacation back on earth. And if Mabel was still willing, I'd be a married man before long.

So, I was feeling good—taking in the sights as I raced along. My rocket exhaust emitted a long ribbon of white against the blue-black background of outer space—and the exhaust just hung motionless in the airless space, like a limp ribbon on a windless night on earth.

Suddenly, I blinked as a brilliant headlight of another space ship shone into my face. I reversed rockets and put the engine on idle. The other space craft pulled alongside, and dropped a boarding plank. I opened the hatch to allow the space traveler to enter. I figured he was in some kind of trouble.

I was wrong. I was the one in trouble. For I recognized my visitor at once—Verdon Hawley, an earth man, and the most wanted man in the universe. Security police of every planet were under order to ray-gun him on sight.

"I—I wouldn't have stopped if I'd recognized your space ship," I said.

"I know," Hawley replied, turning briefly to glance back at the distinctive swept-back fins on his ship. Both Hawley's face and his vehicle were known to every one who used the space lanes.

"That's why I shone my headlamp in your eyes," he concluded.

"What do you want with me, anyway? Surely, it isn't the load of toys I'm carrying!" I said.

Hawley's fingers were tightly curled around the trigger mechanism of his ray-gun. "No, I'm too old to play with toys. But I am taking your cargo, as it happens."

I opened my mouth to protest, but Hawley shut me up with, "Don't feel too bad, mister.

I'm giving you my ship in exchange. Now, get moving!"

The space criminal prodded me with his weapon, and I got up. "What's the idea?" I asked.

"I don't mind telling you," he said, and his voice was ominous. "The Security Men are closing in. They're under orders to start shooting the instant they spot my ship. Well, let them—you'll be driving it! And I'll be making my getaway in your cargo ship!"

Moments later, I found myself at the controls of the crime space craft, and Hawley was already jetting off in my cargo ship. I stared numbly at the white-ribboned exhaust that stretched out like toothpaste behind me. Then, I went into action. There were plenty of Security ships about. All I had to do was radio them and alert them to the situation. But Hawley had thought of that possibility, too, and had left me with a smashed radio.

A Security Squad car can throw a ray-gun beam a distance of an earth mile. I was about a mile and a yard away when I suddenly found myself the target of a fast shot. I banked the ship, did a somersault, twisted my tail—all in the hope of warning the Security Men. But it was hopeless. They kept on firing—and I escaped by racing through a cosmic dust cloud. But how long could I elude them?

And then I recalled something I'd read once—about an advertising method practiced back in the 20th century.

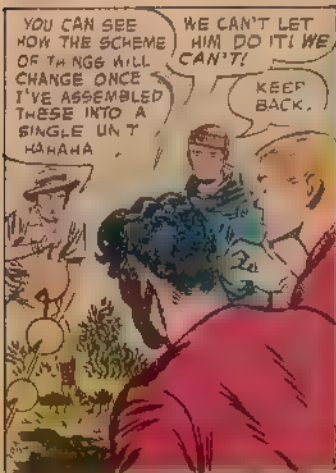
Shortly after, Verdon Hawley was the most surprised man in the universe when he found himself ringed by three Security Squad cars.

"I smashed my radio!" he exclaimed. "How did you find out?" he asked the head security man.

The space policeman smiled and pointed to where I had used the white-ribboned exhaust of the ship to write out an urgent message in space. Sky-writing, I think it was called.



CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN



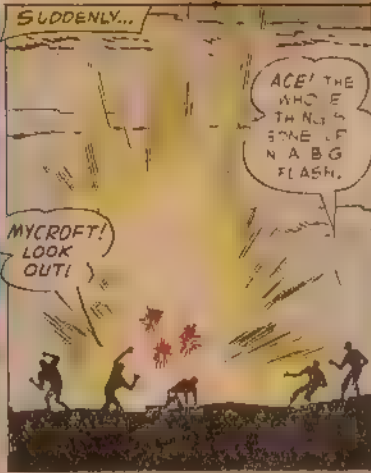
YOU CAN SEE
HOW THE SCHEME
OF THINGS WILL
CHANGE ONCE
I'VE ASSEMBLED
THESE INTO A
SINGLE UNIT
HAHAHA

WE CAN'T LET
HIM DO IT! WE
CAN'T!

KEEP
BACK..



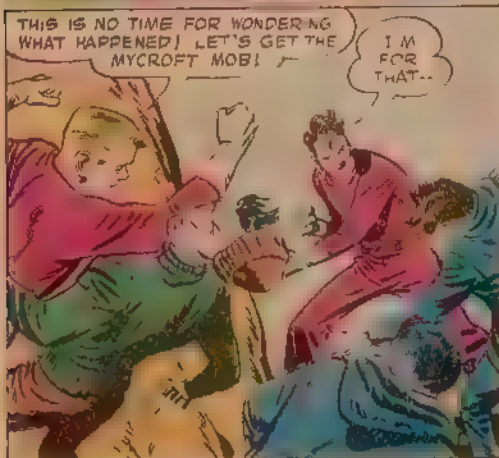
NOW--TO
CONNECT
THE LAST..



SUDDENLY...

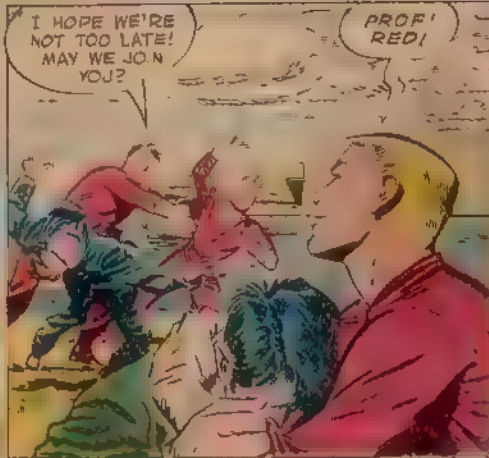
MYCROFT!
LOOK
OUT!

ACE! THE
WHO E
THINGS
SOME OF
NABG
FLASH.



THIS IS NO TIME FOR WONDERING
WHAT HAPPENED! LET'S GET THE
MYCROFT MOB!

I'M
FOR
THAT..



I HOPE WE'RE
NOT TOO LATE!
MAY WE JOIN
YOU?

PROF!
RED!



WE... MYCROFT- WE NOT
HERE IN TIME TO SEE
YOUR AMBITIONS POP
LIKE A BALLOON!

YOU SEE MYCROFT YOU
PLAN TO A F A A THERE
WAS A ROD MISSING FROM
ONE OF THOSE OBJECTS
YOU WERE ASSEMBLING!



THIS ONE YOUR MAN NEVER
--AS HE DROVE T OUT OF
HE BALL WHEN THEY
HUACKED ME.

WELL THEN?
FENG ON MEAN-
ONE TING TO ME
THE BEGINNING OF A
NEW ASSIGNMENT

THE JINXED WATERWAY

IT all began in Torres Strait, somewhere between New Guinea and Australia. The schooner *Mermaid* had just completed her fourth consecutive day of calm, uneventful sailing, when suddenly, tragedy struck. It was shortly before midnight when the rains came, followed by fierce winds that tore through the vessel's rigging, making her impossible to maneuver. Within minutes, the *Mermaid* was dashed against a sharp coral reef that tore a giant hole in her hull.

"Abandon ship!" came the cry of the captain—and in an instant, all the passengers and crew were overboard, fighting the vicious sea, in an attempt to reach a large rock nearby. There they remained for three days, until the bark *Swiftsure* hove into view, and rescued them. And, strangely enough, not a single life was lost in this perilous episode.

Yet, this was only the beginning of the most incredible series of sea disasters in history. For as the *Swiftsure* approached New Guinea, she was caught up in a freak current—which even the navigation charts didn't indicate—and quickly dashed to pieces against coastal rocks. Once again, all the ship's personnel had to go overboard—and this time, there was no solid place where they could await rescue.

But fate was still on the side of the castaways, as the schooner *Governor Ready* appeared, soon afterwards, and safely rescued every one of them. No sooner had this third ship resumed her course, however, than a raging fire broke out, forcing a third abandoning, this time in lifeboats.

Now, there seemed little hope of survival. Land was nowhere in sight—the rough waters were impossible to navigate with mere oars—and no vessels were scheduled along this route for days. But,

incredibly, a fourth rescuer did appear. The cutter *Comet*, blown off her regular course by a storm, soon spotted the hobbling lifeboats, and effected a complete rescue.

During the following week, all was serene aboard the *Comet*, as she pursued her voyage without the slightest mishap. Even the crews of the three doomed vessels had begun to relax and laugh at their fears that some curse had been cast on this body of water. Little did they realize that their troubles were far from over.

For another unexpected storm blew up, buffeting and tossing the *Comet* about until she began to capsize. Four crews now had to go overboard—the *Comet's* in their own lifeboats, the other three with odds and ends of floating wreckage to keep them above the surface. For 18 hours, they remained at the mercy of the wild waters and hungry sharks. Yet, every one of them was still alive when the packet *Jupiter* finally arrived to save them.

Still, one more catastrophe was in the offing, as the *Jupiter* struck a reef, two days later, and sank as the others had. This time, it was the vessel *City of Leeds* which pulled off the rescue—again without a single life lost—and delivered all the crews safely to shore.

Had some sort of hex been placed on this waterway? It took many years for sailors to think otherwise—and Australian shipping companies had a difficult time inducing seamen to risk this route. Even today, there's many a superstitious old salt who will warn you to steer clear of this passage between Australia and New Guinea. And, of course, if a chance mishap does occur, they'll hear nothing of weather conditions or rescue attempts. They'll simply wink knowingly, and relate the whole story of the jinxed waterway.



CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN



THE CONSEQUENCES OF TESTING A SUBSTANCE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN CAN BE FEARFUL. AND THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS DANGEROUS TASK. BUT THE DANGER THAT EMERGES IS MORE TERRIFYING THAN THEY ARE QUALIFIED FOR HERE. THEY ARE THREATENED BY ONE OF THEIR OWN NUMBER, AS THEY PIT THEMSELVES AGAINST

THE
INVESTIGATOR
OF THE INVINCIBLE CHALLENGER

CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN

THE SCENE: A RESEARCH LABORATORY. THE SUBJECT A MISCHIEVOUS MONKEY WHICH HAS ESCAPED FROM ITS CAGE

UNMINDFUL OF THE CHEMICALS SURROUNDING THE PLAYFUL ANIMAL CAPERS AMONG THEM WITH DIRE RESULTS

THE SPILLED SOLVENT GAS MIX AND ON TEL IN SECONDS, THE ROOM IS A MASS OF ROARING FLAMES



BUT IN THE VERY CENTER OF THE RAGING FIRE IS AN AMAZING SIGHT. THE MONKEY CONTINUES TO PLAY, UNHARMED



ABR. PTY, BOTH THE HOLOCAUST AND MONKEY VANISH!

WHY T'S FANTASTIC! THAT MONKEY SHOULD HAVE PERISHED, PROF. CURTIS!

BUT IT DIDN'T! LIKE ALL THE ANIMALS IN THE EXPERIMENTS WE CARRIED OUT THAT MONKEY WAS ABLE TO ADAPT ITSELF TO EXTREME TEMPERATURES!



BUT ISN'T THAT A RISKY BUSINESS?

ANYTHING THAT'S HEAT RESISTANT DOES NOT COUNT! IT HAS COMPLETE ADAPTATION, INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY. THAT'S THE ASTOUNDING MANIFESTATION OF THIS STRANGE POWER!



OF COURSE WHAT YOU OBSERVED WAS AN ACCIDENT, THE MONKEY HAD BEEN FED ONE OF THE PELLETS WE MENTIONED

THEN WE SET THE CAMERA IN MOTION IN A CONCEALED METAL COMPARTMENT--TO MAKE A FILMED RECORD OF THE MONKEY'S BEHAVIOR!





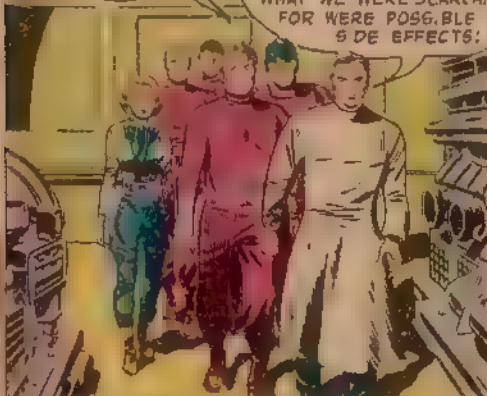
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN



YOU SURE GOT MORE THAN YOU BARGAINED FOR!

NO, WE'VE PROVED THIS ADAPTIVE PHENOMENON IN OTHER EXPERIMENTS WHAT WE WERE SEARCHING FOR WERE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS!

YOU SEE, GENTLEMEN, WE'RE EXPERIMENTING WITH A SUBSTANCE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN-- A CHEMICAL NEVER ENCOUNTERED IN MAN'S EXPERIENCE. WE MUST BE CERTAIN OF ITS FULL CAPABILITIES!



AND YOU SAY THIS CHEMICAL CAME FROM OUTER SPACE?

YES. ITS CONTAINER WAS IMBEDDED IN A METEOR THAT FELL FROM THE SKY INTO THE FOREST OUT THERE. DESPITE THE FRICTION-HEAT IT MUST HAVE ENDURED AS IT FELL INTO OUR ATMOSPHERE, THE METEOR DID NOT BURN UP!



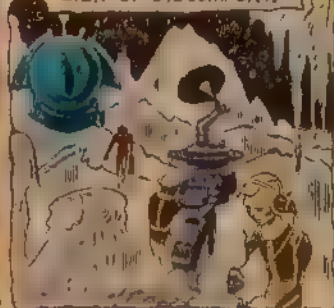
"THAT'S WHAT GAVE US THE CLUE TO THIS CHEMICAL'S AMAZING PROPERTIES--AND PURPOSE! IMAGINE AN ADVANCED RACE WHICH TRAVELS AMONG THE STARS..."



THEY ARE BEINGS WITH BODIES SIMILAR TO OUR OWN, YET THEY WALK UNHARMED ON HOSTILE PLANETS WHERE THE GROUND IS MOLTEN AND THE AIR IS TOXIC!

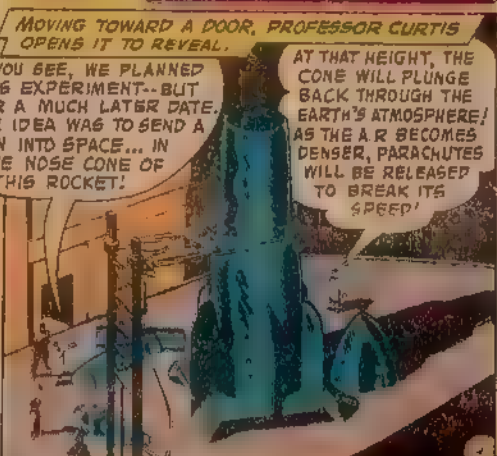
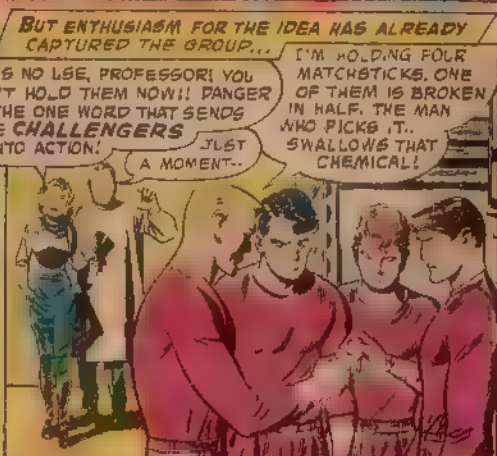
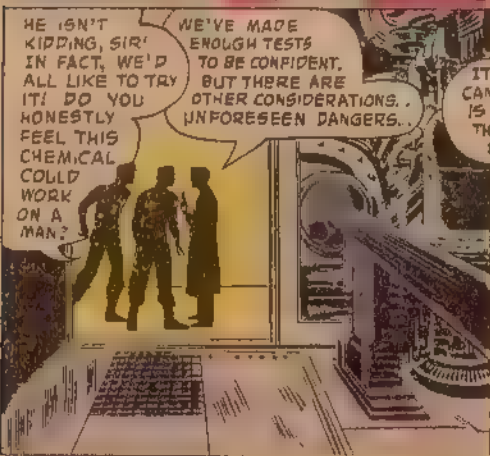
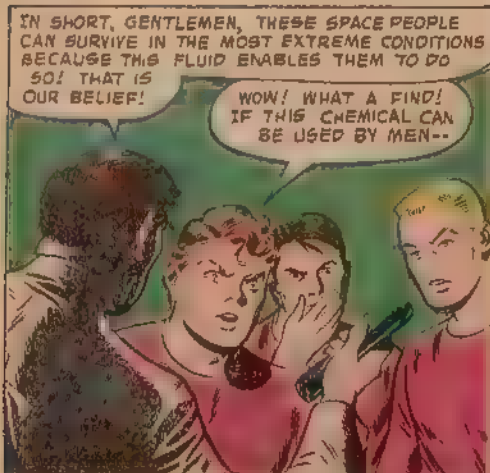


"ON WORLDS WHERE THE TEMPERATURES ARE SO LOW THAT THE ATMOSPHERE ITSELF IS A LAYER OF ICE CRYSTALS, THESE EXPLORERS DO THEIR WORK WITHOUT A SIGN OF DISCOMFORT!"



"YES. AND WE BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE PLANETS COMPLETELY COVERED BY OCEANS, UNDER WHICH OUR HYPOTHETICAL SPACEMEN MAKE THEIR SURVEYS WITH NO FEAR OF DROWNING!"







THAT'S BEEN DONE BEFORE. IT CAN WORK!

BUT WITH A MAN INSIDE THE CONE? HE MAY SINK IN THE LANDING BUT CAN HE LIVE THROUGH THE FRICTION-HEAT OF THE INITIAL FALL?



YO, R CHEM CAL W LL DECIDE THAT, PROFESSOR. WE CAN LEARN THAT NOW! YOU MUST SEND ME UP!



OVERCOMING ALL FURTHER OBJECTIONS ROCKY IS SOON FITTED FOR THE FLIGHT..

THE CHEMICAL S N THIS GELATINE CAPSULE. YOU CAN TAKE T WTH WATER!



WHEN ROCKY IS SEALED N THE NOSE CONE, IT S RA SED AND FASTENED. THEN THE ROCKET S FIRED NTO SPACE!



OH ACE, I-I KNOW IT HAD TO BE DONE. R.U.T

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ROCKY, JUNE WHEN HE GETS BACK, EVERY SPACEMAN OF THE FUTURE WILL OWE HIS SAFETY TO HIM

ANXIOUS MOMENTS PASS AS THE ROCKET'S FLIGHT IS TRACKED SLOWLY.

PROFESSOR CURT S QUICKLY IN THE LABORATORY-! SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH THE MONKEY!



GREAT SCOTT. I WAS AFRAID OF THIS!

THERE'S BEEN AN ADVERSE REACTION! THE CHEM CAL SEEMS TO HAVE AFFECTED IT..

RESPIRATION AND HEART-BEAT ARE NORMAL...THE EYES ARE OPEN AND ALERT NO PARALYSIS OF THE LIMBS YET



THE ANIMAL IS EVIDENTLY IN SOME FORM OF COMA. THE CHEMICAL DEFINITELY REACTS ON THE BRAIN CELLS!

OUR MAN IN THE ROCKET--EVEN IF HE COMES THROUGH THE HEAT BARRIER ALIVE--HOW WILL THE CHEMICAL REACT ON HIM?





THE ANSWER IS NOT LONG IN COMING! FROM ITS INCREDIBLY SWIFT ASCENT INTO SPACE, THE ROCKET'S NOSE CONE SOON PARACHUTES DOWN FROM THE SKY TO LAND IN A BROAD F.E.D.

THERE IT IS! IT'S LANDED!

BE CAREFUL, NOW YOU APPROACH IT! THE CONE MAY BE TOO HOT--EVEN FOR THESE ASBESTOS SLITS.



WHEN THEY REACH THE SCENE...

DID YOU SAY HOT? IT'S COATED WITH ICE!

BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE UNLESS...



SUDDENLY, A SECTION OF THE NOSE CONE FALLS AWAY

LOOK! IT'S ROCKY! HE'S ALIVE!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM? HE LOOKS SO STRANGE!



ALL AT ONCE...

YOU WON'T GET ME!

YEOW! HE'S HEATING THE GROUND TO BOILING -AAA

THE CHEMICAL IT'S CHANGED HIM... GIVEN HIM NEW POWERS!



QUICKLY RECOVERING FROM THE SHOCK, PROF PURSUES ROCKY AS HE FLEES...

ROCKY WILL CALM DOWN WHEN HE RECOGNIZES ME



BUT ROCKY MEETS THE ONCOMING TRUCK WITH AN ICY BLAST...

YOU'LL NEVER HARM ME! I CAN STOP YOU!





CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN



HE PROZE PROF SO
HE CAN'T MOVE. HE'LL
BE OKAY ONCE HE
THAWS OUT!

BUT WHAT ABOUT
ROCKY? WHAT'S
HAPPENED TO
HIM?

IT WAS FOOLHARDY TO ATTEMPT THIS EXPERIMENT!
WE UNDERESTMATED THE CHEMICAL'S POWER. IT NOT
ONLY HELPS THE SUBJECT TO MUSTER THE NATURAL
FORCES IN HIS BODY--
BUT IT ENABLES HIM TO
MAGNIFY AND PROPOL
THEM AS WEAPONS!

RIGHT NOW, ROCKY IS
AS DANGEROUS AS ANY
MENACE WE'VE ENCOUNTERED
FROM THE
UNKNOWN!



MEANWHILE, ACE HAS BEEN
MAKING PREPARATIONS OF
HIS OWN..

LUCKY
THIS LIGHT PLANE
IS AVAILABLE! HURRY
WITH THAT NET,
PROFESSOR.

WE'VE USED IT
TO RECAPTURE
ANIMALS
ESCAPING
FROM THE
LABORATORY

SOON AFTER.. THERE HE
IS! I'LL BUZZ HIM WITH
FULL THROTTLE, AND DROP
THE NET ON HIM BEFORE
HE CAN TRY ANYTHING!

AND BEFORE ROCKY CAN WARD
OFF THE NET...

IT WORKED.
NOW IF I'LL
HOLD HIM UNTIL
WE CAN CALM
HIM DOWN--



B.T.

GOOD GRIEF. HE'S
SHOT UP TO GIGANT
SIZE AND IS BURSTING
RIGHT THROUGH
THE NET

ACE'S CRY OF ALARM HARDLY HAS LEFT HIS
LIPS WHEN A GIANT HAND SWATS THE
PLANE FROM THE SKY AS IF IT WERE
A MERE INSECT!





UTILIZING HIS INCREDIBLE POWER, ROCKY RETURNS TO NORMAL SIZE AND CONTINUES

H. S. P. GHT

THERE MAY BE MORE I MUST HIDE SOMEWHERE!



LATER, AT THE RESEARCH LABORATORY...

HOW CAN WE CAPTURE ROCKY WHEN HE CAN FIGHT OFF ANYTHING?

ANYTHING EXCEPT FRIENDSHIP! IF WE CAN GET HIM TO RECOGNIZE US, MAYBE HE'LL RETURN TO HIS SENSES!



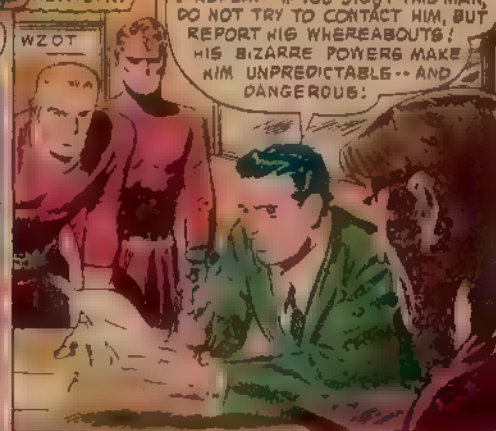
WE CAN'T LET HIM RUN LOOSE! WE MUST KNOW HIS MOVEMENTS!

SUPPOSE WE BROADCAST TO THE RESIDENTS OF THIS AREA TO KEEP ROCKY IN SIGHT! THEN WE CAN GET TO HIM WHEN WE'RE READY WITH OUR NEXT MOVE!



SHORTLY...

I REPEAT-- IF YOU SIGHT THIS MAN, DO NOT TRY TO CONTACT HIM, BUT REPORT HIS WHEREABOUTS! HIS BIZARRE POWERS MAKE HIM UNPREDICTABLE-- AND DANGEROUS!



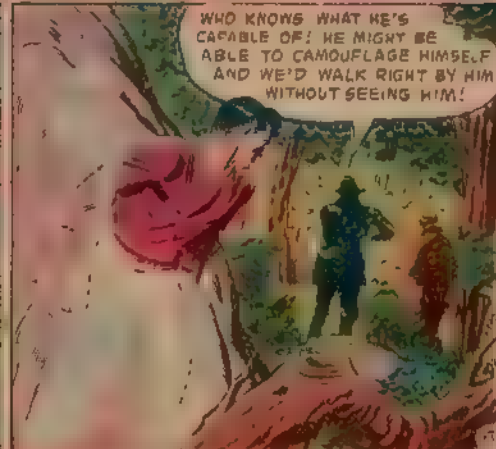
LOO, SEARCH PARTIES COMB THE SURROUNDING FOREST.

NO LUCK SO FAR, BUT FRANKLY, I'M NOT ANXIOUS TO MEET UP WITH THAT KIND OF HOMBRE!

I GET GOOSE PIMPLES JUST THINKING OF HIM!



WHO KNOWS WHAT HE'S CAPABLE OF! HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO CAMOUFLAGED HIMSELF AND WE'D WALK RIGHT BY HIM WITHOUT SEEING HIM!



BUT THE FOREST CAN HARBOR MORE THAN ONE FUGITIVE. IN THE DENSE INTERIOR...

HEY, CHOPPER. HERE'S ANOTHER FLASH ON THAT GUY THEY'RE LOOKING FOR. HE LOOKS LIKE HE KNOWS HIS BEARSKIN PARTS.

I'M FOR LAMMING OUT OF THIS HIDEOUT! IF THAT CHARACTER FINDS THE PLACE, HE'LL DRAW THE LAW AFTER HIM. LIKE FLIES!

YOU KNUCKLEHEADS. I'M HOPING THIS ROCKY DAY SHOWS UP: HE COULD BE OUR TICKET TO A BIG, FAT GRAY TRAIN.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE IN MIND, CHOPPER, BUT YOU'VE GOT YOUR WISH! HERE HE COMES!

TAKE IT EASY, PAL! WE'RE FRIENDS. SEE? COME AND DRINK THERE'S GOOD CROW-- HOT COFFEE.

I HOPE CHOPPER KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING. THE RADIO SAID THIS GUY IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN AN ATOM BOMB!

FATIGUED AND FAMISHED, ROCKY FOLLOWS

THERE YOU ARE, PAL! WE KNOW HOW TO TREAT YOU RIGHT! JUST TELL F YOU WANT MORE!

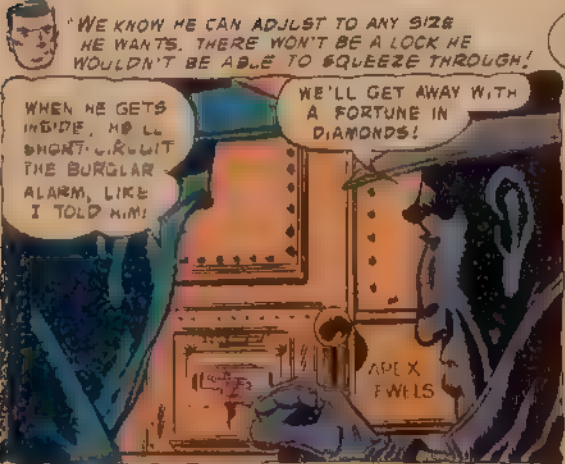
MAKE UP ONE OF THE BEDS, ROXIE! OUR PAL MUST BE TIRED FROM ALL THAT RUNNING! HE NEEDS SOME SLEEP.

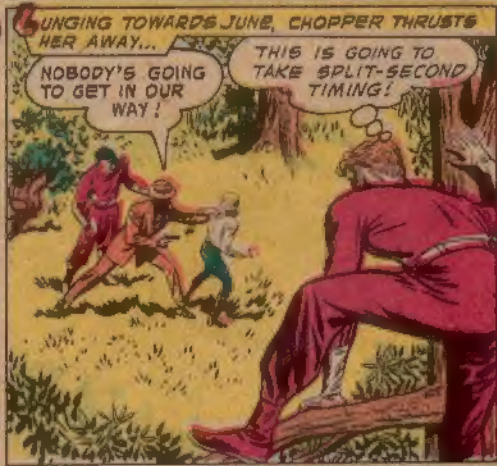
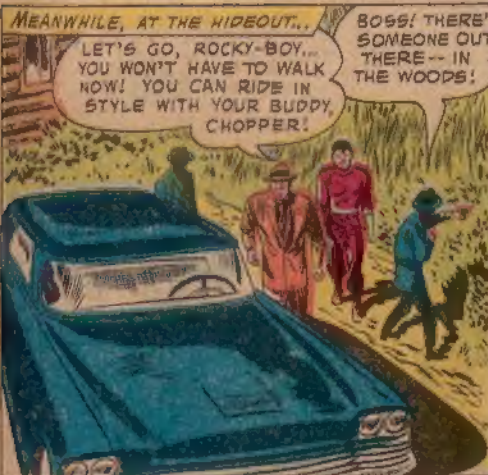
MOMENTS AFTER HE LIES DOWN, ROCKY FALLS ASLEEP...

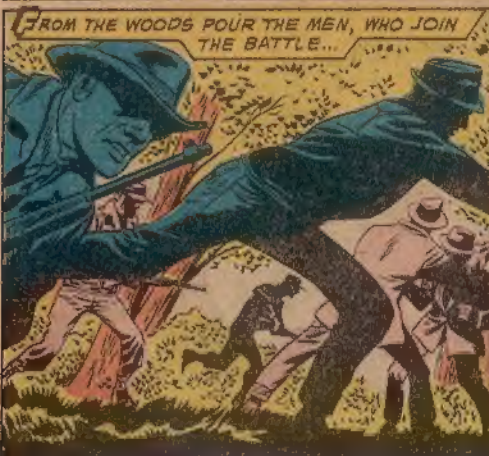
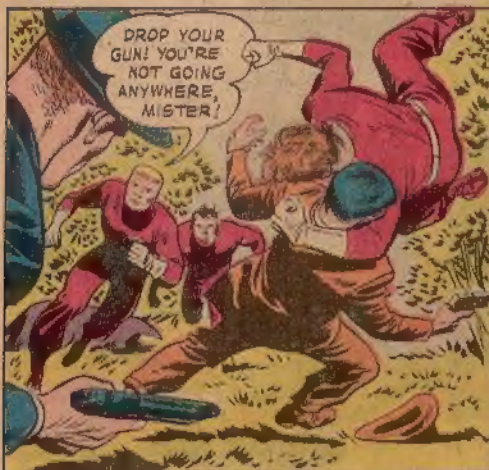
THE BROADCAST WAS RIGHT ABOUT HIS LOSS OF MEMORY! HE DOESN'T HAVE AN INKLING OF WHO WE ARE.

HE TRUSTS US! THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT! LISTEN, WE CAN MAKE HIM PART OF OUR MOB!

WITH HIM ON OUR SIDE, THE LAW COULDN'T TOUCH US! YOU HEARD ABOUT HIS POWERS! MAYBE HE CAN THROW LIGHTNING BOLTS!









Doctor

ROCKET

MAY I LOOK THROUGH THE TELESCOPE, DR. ROCKET?

CERTAINLY!

HE'S NEW HERE!
MY, HE SHOWS A
LOT OF INTEREST!

WHAT A SIGHT!
I'VE NEVER SEEN
ANYTHING LIKE IT
IN MY LIFE!

NEXT
DAY..

COME ON, WE'RE
ALMOST READY
TO BLAST OFF ON
OUR EXPERIMENTAL
TRIP!

TO THE
MOON

WHAT ARE YOU
DOING WITH THOSE
GOLF CLUBS?

I SAW ALL THE FLAT TERRAIN
AND BIG HOLES ON THE MOON!
WHAT A SWELL PLACE TO PLAY
GOLF!

ABDUL

the FIRE EATER

